

Michigan Senate Education Meeting
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Public Comment
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Good Afternoon, Senators. Before addressing the issue at hand, I would first like to thank you for your service to the great state of Michigan and to the good people who reside here. I would particularly like to express my gratitude to you on behalf of all the homeschoolers in the state, for your support of legislation that allows us to homeschool freely here. You may be unaware of this, but Michigan is considered one of the best states in the union to homeschool in. Although Michigan is struggling to keep its residents due to the economic challenges here, there are many homeschoolers, in one income families who have chosen to stay here despite those challenges, because of the homeschooling freedoms and opportunities here. So, again thank you.

You may also be unaware that homeschoolers are paying close attention to the issue of Common Core State Standards. As a homeschooler for 18 years, and a member and leader of several homeschool groups over those years, I would like to address you today regarding this issue.

Six weeks ago, North Carolina Lt. Governor Dan Forest asked some questions of the North Carolina Department of Instruction regarding Common Core so that he would be better informed before a State Board of Education meeting. The Department of Instruction replied that they would be happy to meet his request if he would send them 10,000 pieces of blank paper for them to answer on.

(<http://blog.heritage.org/2013/08/20/10000-pages-needed-to-answer-common-core-questions/>) To my knowledge he is still waiting. Unlike him, I do not have the time to read that much to intelligently comment here on the contents of Common Core. *We have all heard the concerns that a huge focus is on non-fiction, informational text, versus real literature, and that algebra is not introduced until 9th grade instead of 8th, and that times tables are not introduced until 5th grade instead of 4th, and that there is no instruction for cursive writing, and that the fine arts will be neglected because they won't be test on.* Maybe someone else today can comment on that.

Rather, I would like to address the process which has brought us here today.

No one will disagree that many of our state's children are struggling in school. I agree that on the surface, having a "common core" of standards sounds good. However, this process of securing "free" government prize money to help our schools seems suspect.

The application process for Phase 1 of Race to the Top Funding lasted only two months, from November 2009 to January 2010. Of the 500 points possible for each state to earn on the application, 70 points were given if the state signed on to "adopting common standards." (<http://www2ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>)

However, these standards were not even finished being written until June of 2010.
(<http://www.hslda.org/commoncore/timeline.aspx>)

So in essence, 45 states signed on to common standards, sight unseen, Michigan unfortunately being one of them. Thankfully, almost half of those states have since postponed implementation, again Michigan being one of them. (<http://truthinamericaneducation.com/common-core-state-standards/states-fighting-back-map/>)

On that same application, 47 points were awarded if the state agreed to implement data retrieval systems to track our kids, data systems not yet fully explained. That 47 points plus the 70 = 117 out of 500; almost 25%!

*During Phase I, Massachusetts earned the highest possible amount of points on the application for their already successful math and English programs, so they did not sign on to adopting different curriculum standards, thinking theirs were already very good. They placed 13th. This meant they didn't win any money. During Phase II, the only thing they changed on their application was their willingness to adopt common standards. They moved up in ranking to #1 and won \$250 million. Interesting!
(<http://www.bizjournals.com/boston/stories/2010/08/23/daily16.html?page=all>)*

As a note, on the application, the state could only earn 10 points out of 500 for intervening in “lowest achieving schools,” which would seem to me, to be of far more value and worth towards points for receiving funding for schools, than data collection and new standards.
(<http://www2ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/executive-summary.pdf>)

I would like to quote from a Fox News article from Aug 8, of this year. “Stanford Prof. James Milgram, the only mathematician on the Common Core Validation Committee, refused to sign off on the math standards, calling the whole thing ‘in large measure a political document’ *during testimony he gave in May 2011*. (He said), ‘I had considerable influence on the mathematics standards in the document. However, as is often the case, there was input from many other sources...A number of these sources were mainly focused on things like making the standards as non-challenging as possible...’ adding that it led to a number of ‘extremely serious failings’ in the Common Core.”
(<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2013/08/30/new-age-education-fuzzy-math-and-less-fiction/>)

My husband is a cardiologist and he reminded me last night that there is no way the US government would allow trained physicians to give medications to children without years and years of independent research, study and analysis. He said, “Why is the government so quick to allow our kids’ minds to be used as guinea pigs with a set of standards and assessment never before used, AND created by politicians that no nothing of education?”

In the last three days, I have spoken to a schoolteacher, a school board member, a principal and a superintendent, representing two different districts, and asked them point blank, to tell me one specific good thing about Common Core. I even asked Rep. Kevin Daley last week. Not one of them could give me a single positive thing about it. The educators all hemmed and hawed, saying they have “heard” that it is supposed to be great. One of them admitted, “It feels like there is a train leaving the station and everyone is getting loaded on board but I don’t know where it is going. It makes me nervous.”

It is my contention that the State of Michigan like so many other states, signed on, **again**, to something before understanding the details. *Former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi said of the Affordable Healthcare Act, that “we have to pass the bill so we can find out what’s in it.” We are now learning that it is anything but affordable. Where the federal government is concerned, “Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice shame on me.”*

Please, let’s learn our lesson. Let’s stop the implementation of Common Core here in Michigan while we can. We only agreed to accept nationally common standards in an effort to win prize money from the government. After 3 attempts, we have still not “won” any of those funds. Why are we obligated, then, to those standards?

Common Core is just common politics! Our kids are not common, and they deserve better.

Thank you for your time.

Respectively,
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Note-Words in italics may be left unread, due to time constraints.

